

**DELAWARE RE-ENTRY EDUCATION TASK FORCE
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Workgroup**

August 11, 2015

10:00 am

**Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
Administration Building #2, Conference Room #198/199
1825 Faulkland Rd., Wilmington, DE 19805**

MEETING MINUTES

Workgroup members in attendance:

Heath Chasanov, Woodbridge School District

Carlton Lampkins, Colonial School District

The Honorable Jennifer Ranji (Chair), Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

John Sadowski on behalf of The Honorable Mark T. Murphy, Dept. of Education

Dory Zatuchni, Jewish Family Services of Delaware

Brenda Wynder, Lake Forest School District

Eliza Hirst, on behalf of The Child Advocate

Tyrone Jones, Citizen Representative

Carlton Lampkins, Colonial School District

Kathryn Lunger, Office of the Public Defender

Others in attendance:

Alicia Keys, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Cara Sawyer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Kelly Schaffer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (consultant; by phone)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Minutes from the April 29, 2015 MOU Workgroup meeting were reviewed. The minutes were approved. Minutes from the May 28, 2015 MOU Workgroup meeting were also reviewed and approved.

2. Report outs from May Meeting

A report out was provided on if and how student enrollment information can be shared or verified through existing systems. Currently, schools and districts are able to include enrollment documentation – for example, birth certificates, proof of residency – in eSchool in PDF format. When a student transfers to a new school that school is able to access the student's eSchool information. The challenge, however, is that PDFs do not transfer with the student's eSchool record.

It was suggested that the MOU could be utilized to set parameters for verifying a student's enrollment information when they are transferring to a district from YRS care. For instance, the receiving district could have an understanding that since a student was previously enrolled in another Delaware school district that their enrollment information is on file. The sending district could then have a set number of days to produce that documentation. For items that do not change (e.g. birth certificate) the group agreed it should not be necessary to re-verify information.

The Workgroup discussed that enrollment information required might vary by district as well as how and from whom that information would be received. The group also explored challenges experienced by families that make it difficult to produce enrollment verification. Birth certificates should be on file with the district the student last attended and would not change. Proof of residency is much more difficult to obtain. For example, families may not know where a student will live when they are released from YRS care, their home placement may change on short notice, and some students live with non-relatives. The short timeframe in which documentation needs to be produced, often in two weeks or less due to the current schedule of transition meetings, makes it even more difficult for families.

Workgroup members considered how student documentation on file with DSCYF could help alleviate some of the re-enrollment challenges. Much of the information necessary for student enrollment is accessible in existing systems and the Workgroup is committed to finding ways to ease the burden on families to have to re-produce documents that are already on file. The main piece of documentation that should have to be resubmitted to a district is proof of residency given the transiency of youth transitioning from YRS care. The Workgroup acknowledged that before a youth transitions back to his or her home, the Probation Officer does a check of the home, and is satisfied that this is where the youth is going after discharge. The Workgroup would like to explore if this could be a way to validate the address for the district to which the youth would like to enroll.

The second report out from the May MOU Workgroup meeting was related to the electronic sharing of student IEP information. Currently, eSchool does not allow IEP information to be transferred from one district to another. An upgrade to the system, eSchool Plus, will allow for the electronic transfer of IEP records. Upgrades to eSchool Plus are due to be completed in summer 2016.

3. Review of Education/Transition Meetings for Youth in Secure Care, including proposed "45-day Meeting"

At the last MOU Workgroup meeting members discussed the importance of building in more time (than the existing two weeks) for student placement decisions and re-enrollment. The Department met internally to review the recommendations from the Workgroup on who should be included at education and transition meetings and a document was provided summarizing those meetings. A suggestion was made to frame participation with districts/schools rather than one or the other since the representative to attend may vary depending on where the student is returning.

Currently, education and treatment meetings take place on a regular basis with some crossover between the two. A transition meeting held at the student's school district takes place within two weeks of the student's release from YRS. The Workgroup agreed it is important to start inviting districts to join existing monthly education meetings by phone or in person. It is being proposed that districts/schools be required to attend the "45 day" meeting, which would take place at DSCYF. Then, the meeting that currently takes place two weeks prior to student's release could be used for the student to visit the school.

Input was provided from Workgroup members on some of the challenges that make it difficult for students to have smooth transitions back into an educational setting. Documentation for enrollment, and specifically proof of residency, was reiterated as a significant challenge. Other challenges include districts requiring certain information – for example, information on youth's charges – and delays in their obtaining that information.

It was noted that it would be essential to confirm what information districts/schools will want prior to the "45 day" meeting in order to make a placement decision. Workgroup members noted enrollment documentation, information about youth's progress while in YRS care and credits obtained will be the main information needed. The goal would be to equip districts/schools with the background information needed so that a productive discussion can be had at the "45 day meeting" leading to a placement decision. If a student has an IEP, additional representatives would be required and invited to attend the meeting, because it is ultimately up to the IEP placement team to make a determination as to where the child will go next. Additionally, for students for which an alternative (district run or CDAP, as appropriate) school placement is an option a representative from the alternative school would attend. A list of items districts will need or want to make placement decisions, and who will provide each item, will be developed.

A final challenge discussed by the Workgroup is incomplete information on the appropriate contacts in district or school to facilitate a student's enrollment. Identifying the individuals who will participate in transition planning at the district or school level will be essential to smooth processes and timely enrollment.

4. Next Steps

The Department will explore whether the MOU Workgroup has addressed all of the issues they desired to be covered in the MOU. A straw man will be prepared for the Workgroup to review. It will also be explored whether the existing DOE MOU or a new MOU will be the best avenue for integrating the recommendations of the Workgroup. The Department started a crosswalk of the DOE MOU and the issues identified by the Workgroup and will revisit that document to make a recommendation.

5. Public Comment

No public comment.

6. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 11:15am.